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(56) Documents Cited

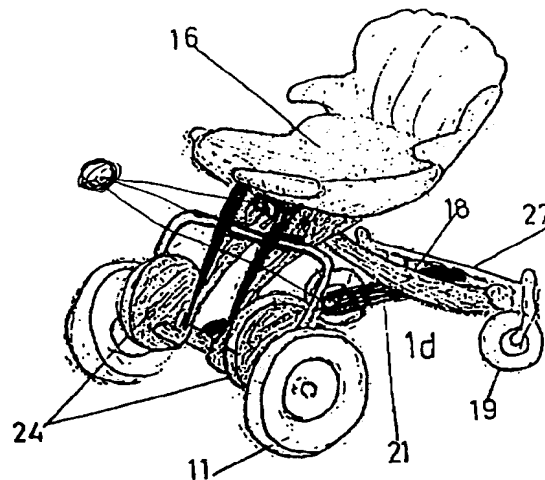
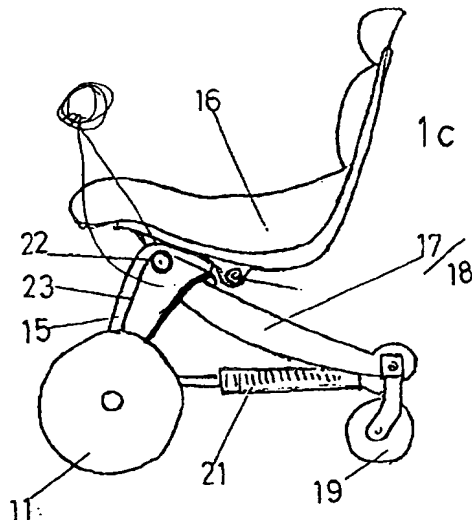
GB 2084940 A US 5501476 A US 4735431 A
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(58) Field of Search

UK CL (Edition O) B7B BTC BTL2, B7E ECF ECX EDD
EDL EDR EDS EFF, B7H HC
INT CL⁶ A61G 5/00 5/02 5/04 5/10, B62M 1/00 1/04
1/06 1/08 11/02
Online database: WPI

(54) "Hands free" collapsible wheelchair with motor assistance, skid steer, and seat raising ram

(57) Separate drives to left and right front wheels can be activated by paddles under the user's thighs, which activate sprockets and secondary chain drives via drive rods (fig. 2). Alternative drives may be activated by elbows or back. Motor drives may be used to supplement or replace user input. One-way clutches are located within each wheel to allow forward or reverse drive. Brakes are fitted to each front wheel. Separate front and rear subframes are pivoted at 22, and may be drawn together by electric or hydraulic ram 21 to raise seat 16. Splayed arms 17 and 18 of the rear subframe, and carrier bar 27, carry castored rear wheels. Tyres may be pneumatic or solid. Battery packs (not shown) are fitted to bar 27. The front subframe has a rearward extension to support the seat under rollers 29. The seat can swivel horizontally. Plastic or metal construction may be used.



The reference to figure(s) 4, 5 & 6 of the drawings in the printed specification are to be treated as omitted under Section 15(2) or (3) of the Patents Act 1977.

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The claims were filed later than the filing date within the period prescribed by Rule 25(1) of the Patents Rules 1995

GB 2 307 453 A

FIGURE 1.
1 of 3.

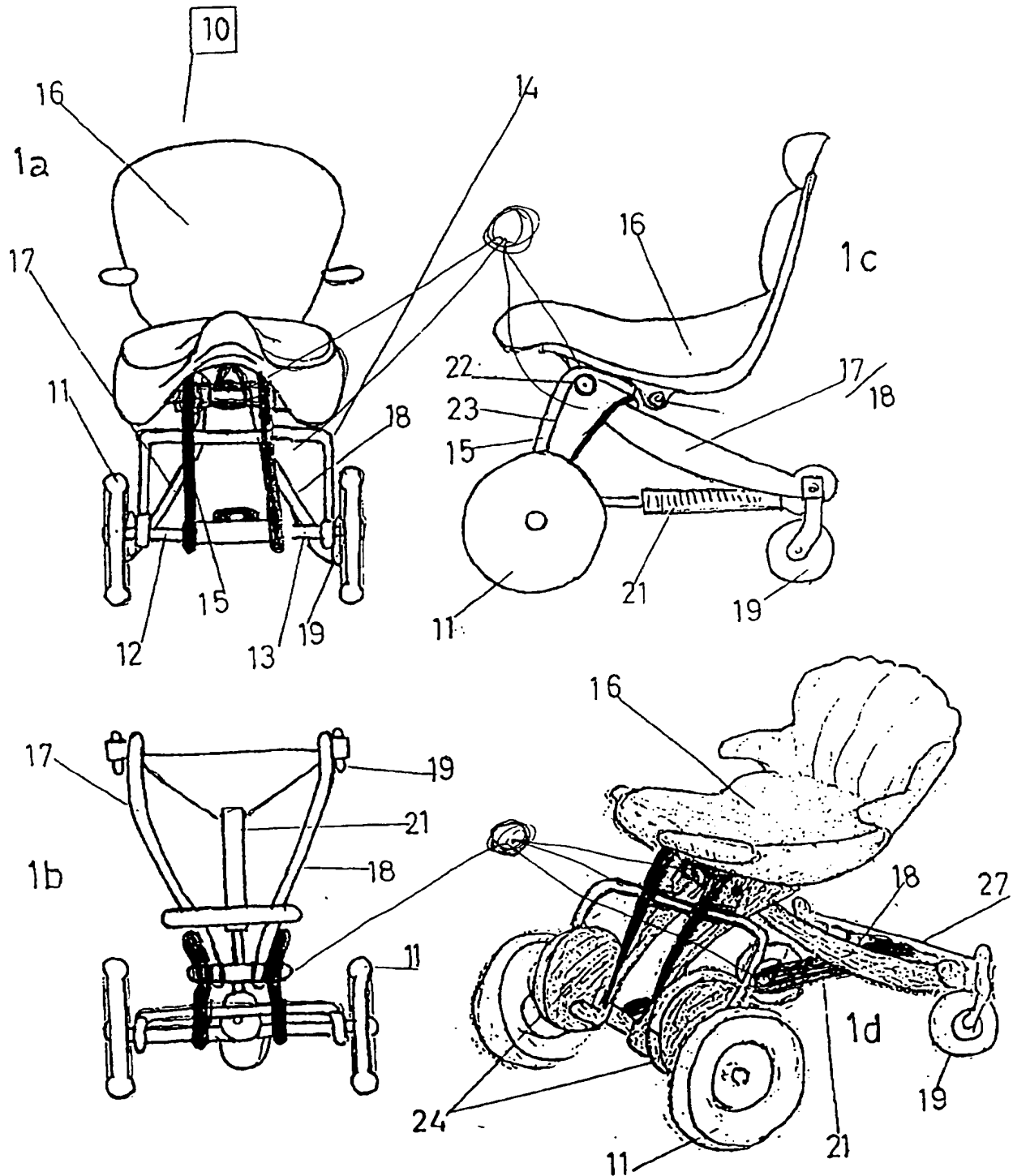


FIGURE 2.
2 of 3.

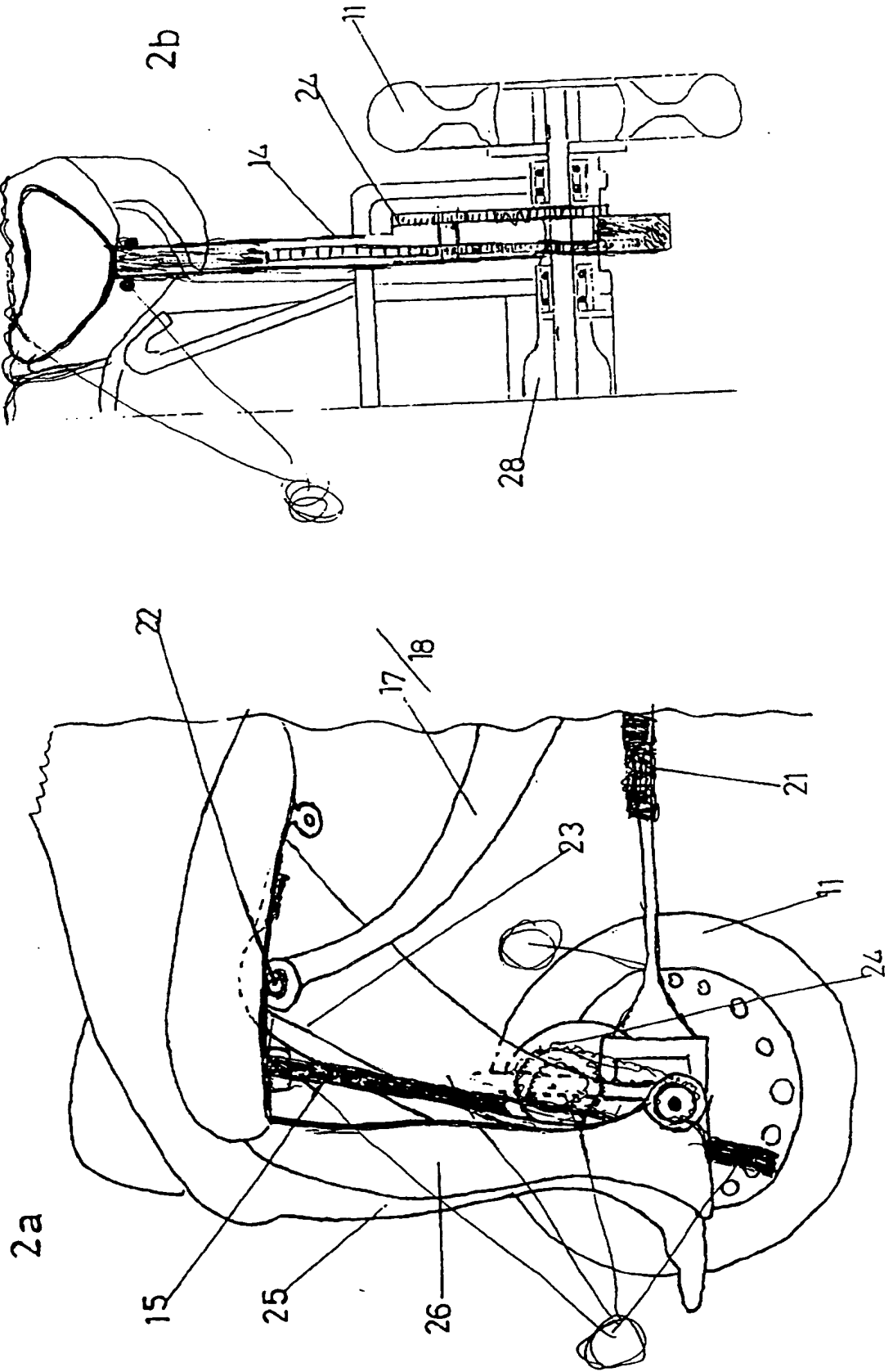
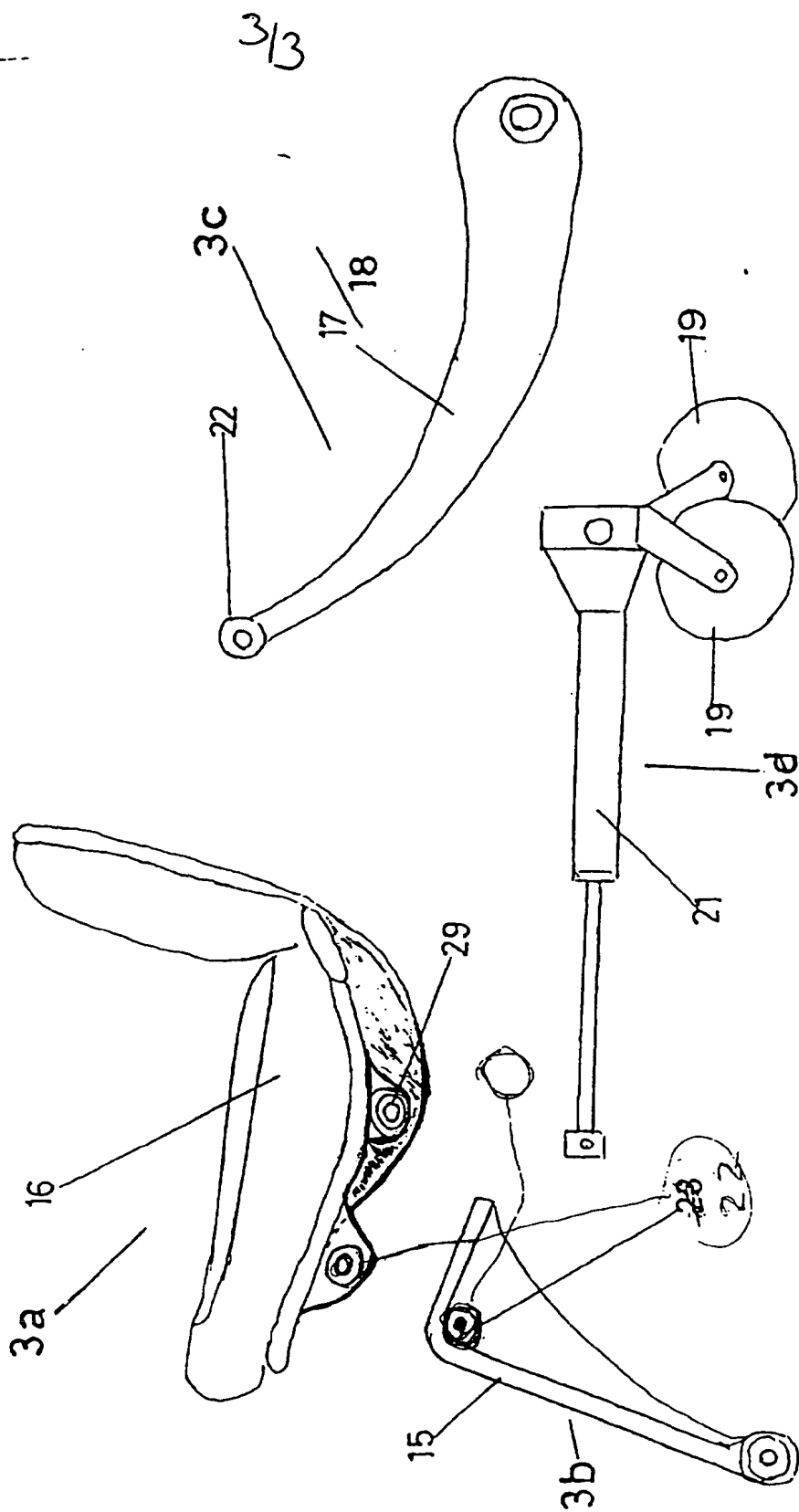


FIGURE 3.



HANDS-FREE LEG/MOTOR POWERED VEHICLE

Field of this Invention

- Hands-free manoeuvrable vehicle.
- Leg/weight powered motion with motor assisted option.
- 5 - For indoor and outdoor commuting over pedestrian areas, around home and work places; at the same time, effectively toning up their physical condition.
- Also, ideally suited to disabled individuals to broaden their independent working capabilities.

10 Background to this Invention

It might be said that vehicles for the Disabled are designed by persons who do not have to use them. It might also be said that the controls provided for the motorized vehicles take no concern for those who have no hands to use them.

15 There are also commercial users of Buggies or Bicycles which do not give hands-free advantage to anyone in the work place, which is inconvenient and time consuming and the production of a specially designed vehicle for this purpose could reduce the price to disabled users. It is an area
20 well worth developing. This is the purpose of this specification to describe a vehicle which has been designed by a person who has spent over forty years in one.

It is not the purpose of this specification to describe the precise detail of each of the components comprising this
25 "hands-free" vehicle, since the methods and techniques of mechanical and electrical functioning are already in the public domain.

HANDS-FREE LEG/MOTOR POWERED VEHICLE

The innovative steps incorporated in the embodiment of this invention lie in the ability of this vehicle to raise, lower, incline or decline the seat facility and to drive forward, reverse or turn in either direction without the use of the hands.

Anyone, able or disabled, who can use their weight onto their thigh, can pump-pedal the vehicle into any required motion. The power units to the wheel on one side are entirely separate from the power units to the wheel on the other side. This means that motion can be in unison, on one side only, or one forward and the other in reverse, achieving a tight about turn. A move used frequently in an "micro environment".

Description

According to the embodiment of this invention, this "hands-free" vehicle comprises three basic elements which are:-

- 45 The rise and fall/seat saddle assembly
- The leg/pedal, electric motor and reversible wheel assembly
- The seat-elevating with rear castors assembly
- The fixed drive wheels are positioned appropriately with the leg/pedal, motor assembly which is also
- 50 the forward half of the seat-elevating assembly.

HANDS-FREE LEG/MOTOR POWERED VEHICLE

Within the hubs of the driving wheels which are positioned appropriately with the leg/pedal and motor assembly, are lever controlled, one-way clutch reversing units. The mechanism which activates the seat elevating assembly is an electric or hydraulic ram, horizontally orientated between the front wheels and the rear castors, forming the horizontal side of a triangle. The frame, containing the drives, makes the second side, the third side by the splayed castor legs, which join the front drive frame and the saddle frame at the bearing joint. Thus, the bearing joint and the saddle are projected upwards and back down again - to the desired height - by the lengthening and shortening of the ram. Since reversing is within the wheel units, the motor and the chain and sprocket units have one and the same, one direction only spindle movement. The varying speeds are contained within each power unit. Operation of this "hands-free" vehicle is by leg power only or leg power assisted by electric motor or by motor power only. Sometimes, the terrain is tough and needs dual assistance. Sometimes, the motor cuts out and it is essential to move away from extreme weather conditions or wild life which is threatening our safety. Sometimes, the user is tired. Always, the user needs exercise. The controls are put where the use finds them to be most convenient - the back rest or the arm rests for brakes, gear levers, stop starts or any other control.

HANDS-FREE LEG/MOTOR POWERED VEHICLE

Those without the use of their hands, or prefer to use them
80 for other purposes can still have complete and safe control
of this low-powered vehicle.

It must, however, be emphasized again that this
specification does not describe fittings and fixtures,
electronic or electric circuitry or types of pneumatic
85 wheels.

It is the purpose of this specification to register the
inventive steps incorporated in the basic concept.

The embodiment therefore comprises front pneumatic or hard
(as preferred) wheels which are driven by leg and/or motor
90 power on a one-way moving spindle with the forward/reverse
movement by a one-way clutch contained within the hub.

The wheels can free wheel, propel forward or propel in
reverse. Additionally, there is provided rear pneumatic or
hard castor type wheels which enable the vehicle to be
95 appropriately manoeuvred as desired.

The vehicle is in two halves powerwise, enabling the user to
turn. By increasing power to one side, the vehicle will
veer to the other side. By stopping one side only with the
relevant brake, the vehicle will describe an arc on a radius
100 of its own width. By putting one side only into reverse,
the other continuing forward, the vehicle will turn in its
own space. Very frequently use. Reversing turns work on
the same principal.

HANDS-FREE LEG/MOTOR POWERED VEHICLE

105 The front wheel axles are suitably supported on ball or roller bearings and carry in a pivotal or fulcrum form the leg and pedal frame assembly. Between the front wheel axles and the rear castor carrier bar and sited in a horizontal plane, is provided a hydraulic or electric actuator or
110 actuators. Longitudinal extension of the actuator/s will cause the seat assembly to descend and so place it at any desired position convenient to the user.

Fulcrumed on the rear axle is a pair of curved lifters which join, through the tree way bearing joint, onto the leg and
115 pedal front frame. These two acting against each other, as the actuator shortens, push equally upwards on the central bearing joint which rises higher. The saddle is pivotally anchored to the same central bearing joint, so rises too. The front leg frame has an "L" shape away from the main
120 joint which provides a rest for the seat/saddle when more erect. Rollers fixed towards the back of the seat frame eventually, when the seat declines, make contact with the curved lifters - levelling the seat.

A specific embodiment of this invention will now be more
125 particularly described by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings in which : -

Very obviously, in schematic views as shown in Figure 1 only the basic elements are indicated; and in view 1b the seat assembly has been omitted entirely.

130 HANDS-FREE LEG/MOTOR POWERED VEHICLE

The gear boxes 20. are merely indicated on the composite pictorial view 1d . No detail of the battery packs involved are given. It can be seen from the side view 1c that when the lifters 17, 18 are moved by the electric actuator 21. 135 Against the front leg frame by the common use of the ball or roller bearing joint 22 (also shared by the seat ball or roller joint) which elevates the seat/saddle element 18. With each of the front wheels 11 is provided an electric motor which rotates the spindle in one direction only at 140 varying speeds including off. The wheels 11 have within their hubs one-way clutches to run forward or be reverse controlled by a lever conveniently placed. This motor will not exceed 4 mph. It can run with the pedal power, which uses the same spindle 12, 13. The push/pedal element is 145 shown in detail drawing Figure 4, also Figure 2. All movements of the vehicle 10 are controlled by any part of the body i.e. elbows, back etc. readily available to the user.

Reference to Figure 2, View 2a, which is a part view of the 150 front wheel. The position of the legs and feet 25 are indicated forward of the leg rest 26. The front leg frame 15 is shown pivotal on the front wheel 11 axle, and the ball or roller bearing 22, attached to the upper corner of the front leg frame 15.

155 HANDS-FREE LEG/MOTOR POWERED VEHICLE

It will be obvious from the view shown on Figure 5 that any upward or downward movement of the seat saddle element 16, is caused by the retraction of the actuator or its extension as required. The actuator 21 is shown in a horizontal position between the front leg frame 15 and the rear castor wheel 19, carrier bar 27, thus drawing them closer together. The saddle-like nature of the seat 16, gives the user a healthier posture. While the knees slope downwards and grip the foresaddle, providing a natural upright and straight back, which is much more comfortable.

At the same time knee pads set on each side of the front saddle lay on a support bar which pivots from the rear saddle. From the front of the thigh pad is linked a drive rod descending down to the sprocket assembly, shown on Figure 2, in both 2a and 2b. This drive rod can be pumped down to turn the central free wheel sprocket one to two inches. This rod is held firmly to the free wheel sprocket by a roller bearing bridge holder. The free wheel sprocket is fixed by a spindle to a fixed chain bearing chain bearing sprocket approx. 3" or appropriately sized. The encircling chain drops to another free wheel encircled sprocket which is fixed to the main front wheel. The free sprockets are approx. 2" dia. A one inch stroke from the drive rod will take the 12" main wheel a full revolution (or any other appropriately ratio sprockets may be used).

HANDS-FREE LEG/MOTOR POWERED VEHICLE

This action works in one direction to the spindle as also the electric motor, relying on the one-way clutch mechanism for forward and reverse movements in the wheel hub. A simple arrangement which gives versatile working possibilities for the user such as have not been available previously. Referring now to Figure 3, there are shown separate views of the principal components comprising the frame of the vehicle 10.

190 It must here again be emphasised that the drawing does not represent actual design characteristics but merely indicates the functional principles.

It can be seen that View 3b, shows the rear wheels 19 to be preferably strong castors to give good support since the thrust of body weight will be directed to the carrier bar 27 (Figure 1 View 1d) lifters 17,18. Which ever direction the castors turn, the axle should always be outside the body weight to ensure stability. A point not always adhered to on present models 14 (Figure 1 View 1a) and 15. The leg support frame combines as one main front frame. 15 leg frame extends over the main bearing joint 22 (Figure 6 shows detail) and to the rear sufficiently to make carrying struts to hold the weight of the seat 16 element which joins the main bearing joint 22, as also the two lifters 17, 18, which join the main bearing joint situated at the top end of the main leg frame 15.

HANDS-FREE LEG/MOTOR POWERED VEHICLE

The other two ends of the lifters splay outwards to the rear castors and join the carrier bar 27, with
210 pivotal joints.

The front frame also joins the front axles 12,13, with pivotal joints. Between the front wheels 11 and the rear castors 19. There is to be found a horizontally placed actuator, electrically powered with two light-weight
215 batteries on either side of the end joining the carrier bar 27.

The seat element has a roller bar or bars placed beyond the bearer struts on 15 leg frame. These can rest on the lifters 17, 18, when the seat has been lowered, sufficient for the
220 seat rollers 29 to make contact with the said lifters and to level the seat again. The seat saddle can have within its abilities its own rise and fall adjustment and swivel mechanism. These allow the seat under limited circumstances to rise to a "conversation height of 30" and the ability to
225 turn to or beside tables etc for close up contact, where conditions are difficult (not illustrated).

The important features of infinitely adjustable posture control by moving the rear wheel assembly 19 towards or away from the front 11 assembly is uniquely incorporated as the
230 principal aspect of this embodiment.

HANDS-FREE LEG/MOTOR POWERED VEHICLE

Referring now to Figure 3, there are shown separate views of the principal components comprising the vehicle 10.

It must here again be emphasised that the drawing does not
235 represent actual design characteristics but merely indicates the functional principals. Very obviously, all pivotal fulcrums would be provided with appropriate ball or roller bearing assemblies to reduce friction and all the components comprising the vehicle 10 would be constructed in
240 reinforced plastic material where appropriate or in suitable metal where necessary.

It can be seen that the concept herein described introduces aspects of change in hands-free vehicle and wheelchair design which offer considerable advantages for those persons
245 wishing of forced by circumstance to spend many hours / years in the sitting or reclining posture, but enabling them to perform tasks as well as giving them mobility.

It is considered this submission is sufficient to register the concept.

CLAIMS

CLAIM 1.

THIS IS A VEHICLE WITH SEVERAL ESTABLISHED UNITS COMBINED IN A UNIQUE WAY TO PROVIDE A VEHICLE CAPABLE OF LIFTING AND LOWERING THE USER TO ANY DESIRED HEIGHT, ALSO THE USER CAN PROPEL THEMSELF IN ANY DIRECTION BY THEIR OWN BODYWEIGHT OR STRENGTH WHEN ALL FOUR LIMBS ARE NOT FUNCTIONING WELL, OR NEEDED FOR OTHER PURPOSES, A MOTOR ALSO ASSISTS THE BODY OR CAN TAKE OVER THE POWERING ALTOGETHER AS REQUIRED,

CLAIM 1 OF CLAIM 1.THE FRAME HAS FOUR BASIC PARTS.

1. THE FRONT WHEEL FRAME . WHICH CARRIES ON EACH SIDE ENTIRELY SEPARATE PROPULTION, CONTROL AND MOTOR UNITS WHICH CAN OPERATE ON ONE SIDE ONLY, OR IN UNISON , OR IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS AT THE SAME TIME.
2. THE REAR CASTER FRAME. WHICH SPLAYS OUT TO RIGHT AND LEFT FROM THE MAIN BEARING JOINT LOCATED ON THE FRONT WHEEL FRAME WHICH IS PIVOTAL AND CENTRAL MADE UP OF TWO LEGS CARRYING THE TWO REAR CASTERED WHEELS BETWEEN WHICH IS THE ACTUATOR BOX,
3. THE ACTUATOR IS HORIZONTAL AND FUNCTIONS BEWEEN THE FRONT MAIN WHEELS AND THE REAR CASTERED WHEEL BAR, THESE THREE PARTS TOGETHER FORM A TRIANGLE SO THAT WHEN THE HORIZONTAL SIDE SHORTENS OR EXTENDES THE BEARING JOINT AT THE TOP OF THE TRIANGLE RISES AND FALLS,
4. THE SEAT/SADDLE IS PIVOTALLY JOINED TO THE BEARING JOINT WHICH IS SHARED WITH THE REAR CASTER FRAME,

THIS PIVOTAL LINK IS AT THE FRONT END OF THE SADDLE WHILE THE SEAT IS RESTING ON EXTENDED ARMS OF THE FRONT WHEEL FRAME, IT HAS TWO THIGH PADS, ONE EACH SIDE, PIVOTALLY JOINED TO THE REAR OF THE SEAT ,A BACKREST TO SUIT THE USER IS ATTACHABLE. THIS SADDLE HAS ITS OWN RISE AND FALL TO ADD EXTRA HEIGHT WHEN REQUIRED,

CLAIM 2. THE SPROCKET AND CHAIN LINKAGE UNIT, OR GEARS AND BELTS,

THE DRIVE ROD IS LINK JOINED UNDER THE THIGH PAD AND IN LINE WITH THE BODY WEIGHT ABOVE TO PUSH THE ROD AGAINST THE SIDE OF A FREEWHEEL SPROCKET WHICH IS FIXED TO A LARGER CHAINED SPROCKET WHICH IS CHAIN LINKED TO ANOTHER FREE WHEEL SPROCKET FIXED TO THE MAIN WHEEL THUS ALLOWING THE DRIVE ROD TO PUSH MINIMALLY DOWN FROM THE THIGH PAD ONTO THE SPOCKET UNIT AND RISE AGAIN, THIS SMALL PUMPING ACTION WILL ACTIVATE THE VEHICLE WITH OR WITHOUT THE MOTOR BECAUSE THE MAIN WHEEL SPINDLE TURNS IN ONE DIRECTION ONLY ,WHICH ALLOWS THE MOTOR TO BE GRADUALLY ADDED TO THE POWER WHEN NEEDED,

CLAIM 3. THE TWO MAIN WHEELS HAVE AN IN-HUB "ONE WAY CLUTCH" REVERSE ACTION SO THAT THE WHEEL REVERSES RATHER THAN THE SPINDLE.

Amendments to the claims have been filed as follows

CLAIM 1.

THIS IS A VEHICLE WITH SEVERAL ESTABLISHED UNITS COMBINED IN A UNIQUE WAY TO PROVIDE A VEHICLE CAPABLE OF LIFTING AND LOWERING THE USER TO ANY DESIRED HEIGHT, ALSO THE USERS CAN PROPEL THEMSELVES IN ANY DIRECTION BY THEIR OWN BODYWEIGHT OR STRENGTH WHEN ALL FOUR LIMBS ARE NOT FUNCTIONING WELL , OR NEEDED FOR OTHER PURPOSES,, A MOTOR IS ALSO PROVIDED TO ASSIST THE BODY ,IF NEEDED, OR IT CAN TAKE OVER THE POWERING ALTOGETHER .
CLAIM 1 OF CLAIM 1.

THE FRAME HAS FOUR BASIC PARTS.

1. THE FRONT WHEEL FRAME WITH SEAT SUPPORT EXTENDERS WHICH ALLOW THE SEAT TO RECLINE FOR MOTOR TRAVEL PRIMERILY. THIS FRAME CARRIES ON EACH SIDE ENTIRELY SEPARATE PROPULTION CAPABILITIES, CONTROLES, AND MOTOR UNITS WHICH CAN OPERATE ON ONE SIDE ONLY, OR IN UNISON , OR IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS AT THE SAME TIME.
2. THE REAR CASTERED FRAME COSISTING OF TWO SPLAYING LEGS TO RIGHT AND LEFT FROM THE MAIN BEARING JOINT LOCATED HIGH ON THE FRONT WHEEL FRAME, CENTRAL AND PIVOTAL. DECENDING TO THE CASTER BAR BETWEEN THE TWO REAR CASTER WHEELS WHICH ASLO CARRIES THE ACTUATOR BOX.
3. THE ACTUATOR IS HORIZONTAL AND FUNCTIONS BETWEEN THE FRONT MAIN WHEELS AND THE REAR CASTERED WHEEL BAR. THESE THREE PARTS TOGETHER FORM A TRIANGLE TO THE CANTILEVERED SEAT EXTENDERS SO THAT WHEN THE HORIZONTAL SIDE SHORTENS OR EXTENDS THE BEARING JOINT AT THE TOP OF THE TRIANGLE RISES AND FALLS , RECLINES AND DECLINES THE SEAT .

4. THE SEAT SADDLE IS PIVOTALLY JOINED TO THE MAIN BEARING JOINT WHICH IT SHARES WITH THE REAR CASTER FRAME. THIS PIVOTAL LINK IS AT THE FRONT END OF THE SADDLE WHILE THE SEAT IS RESTING ON THE EXTENDED ARMS OF THE FRONT WHEEL FRAME UNTIL CONNECTING WITH THE DISPLAYED CASTER LEGS AND BEING LOWERED WHEN FRAME IS LOWERING. THE SADDLE HAS TWO THIGH PADS, ONE EACH SIDE, PIVOTALLY JOINED TO THE REAR OF THE SEAT, A BACKREST TO SUIT THE USER IS ATTACHABLE. THIS SADDLE HAS ITS OWN RISE AND FALL MECHANISM TO ADD EXTRA HEIGHT WHEN REQUIRED.

CLAIM 2.

THE SPROCKET AND CHAIN, OR GEARS AND BELTS, TRANSMISSION UNITS. THE DRIVE ROD IS LINK JOINED UNDER THE THIGH PAD AND IN LINE WITH THE BODY WEIGHT ABOVE, TO DEPRESS DOWN THE ROD AGAINST THE SIDE OF A FREEWHEEL SPROCKET, THROUGH A HOLDING PIECE, WHICH IS FIXED TO, AND TURNS, A LARGER CHAINED SPROCKET WHICH IS CHAIN LINKED TO ANOTHER FREEWHEEL WHICH IS FIXED TO, AND TURNS, THE MAIN WHEEL THUS ALLOWING THE DRIVE ROD TO PUSH MINIMALLY DOWN FROM THE THIGH PAD ONTO THE SPROCKET UNIT AND RISE AGAIN, THIS SMALL PUMPING ACTION WILL TURN THE MAIN WHEEL A FULL REVOLUTION AND ACTIVATE THE VEHICLE THROUGH VARIOUS COMBINATIONS OF MOVES WITH OR WITHOUT THE MOTOR. BECAUSE THE SPINDLE TURNS IN ONE DIRECTION ONLY AS TOO THE SPROCKET AND CHAIN UNIT, AND THE MOTOR TOO THIS MEANS THE MOTOR POWER CAN BE GRADUALLY ADDED TO HELP THE PUMP ACTION OR TAKE OVER ALTOGETHER.

ANY REVERSE ACTION IS CONTAINED WITHIN THE "ONE WAY CLUTCH" HUB OF THE MAIN WHEELS EITHER INDEPENDENTLY OF EACH OTHER OR IN UNISON OR IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS. WITH OR WITHOUT THE USE OF BRAKES..



Application No: GB 9612800.4
Claims searched: 1

Examiner: Ken Strachan
Date of search: 16 October 1996

Patents Act 1977
Search Report under Section 17

Databases searched:

UK Patent Office collections, including GB, EP, WO & US patent specifications, in:

UK CI (Ed.O): B7B: BTC, BTL2; B7E: ECF, ECX, EFF; B7H: HC;

Int CI (Ed.6): A61G: 5/00, 5/02, 5/04, 5/10;

Other: -

Documents considered to be relevant:

Category	Identity of document and relevant passage	Relevant to claims
A	GB 2,084,940A (Fokerd) Notice actuator 11, which increases wheelbase and raises seat; also rotatable seat, and optional electric motor drive.	
A	US 4,613,151 (Kielczewski) Notice actuator 12, which increases wheelbase and lowers seat; also individual electric motor drives 62 and 64 to front wheels; and castored rear wheel.	
A	US 4,523,769 (Glaser et al) Notice hands free drive by foot paddles.	

X Document indicating lack of novelty or inventive step
Y Document indicating lack of inventive step if combined with one or more other documents of same category.
& Member of the same patent family

A Document indicating technological background and/or state of the art.
P Document published on or after the declared priority date but before the filing date of this invention.
E Patent document published on or after, but with priority date earlier than, the filing date of this application.



Application No: GB 9612800.4
Claims searched: 2

Examiner: Ken Strachan
Date of search: 4 March 1997

Patents Act 1977
Further Search Report under Section 17

Databases searched:

UK Patent Office collections, including GB, EP, WO & US patent specifications, in:

UK CI (Ed.O): B7E: EDD, EDL, EDR, EDS;

Int CI (Ed.6): A61G: 5/02, 5/10; B62M: 1/00, 1/04, 1/06, 1/08, 11/02;

Other: Online database: WPI.

Documents considered to be relevant:

Category	Identity of document and relevant passage	Relevant to claims
A, P	US 5,501,476 (Howell et al) See figure 2, notice thigh supports 52.	
A	US 4,735,431 (Tait) See figure 1, notice wheelchair driven by oscillating levers 20 through ratchet drive 16.	

X	Document indicating lack of novelty or inventive step	A	Document indicating technological background and/or state of the art.
Y	Document indicating lack of inventive step if combined with one or more other documents of same category.	P	Document published on or after the declared priority date but before the filing date of this invention.
&	Member of the same patent family	E	Patent document published on or after, but with priority date earlier than, the filing date of this application.

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